



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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ASSISTANT SECRETARY ORME LEWIS TO LEAVE DEPARTMENT SEPTEMBER 15, 1955

Assistant Secretary Orme Lewis will leave the Department of the Interior on September 15 to return to the practice of law in Phoenix, Arizona, Secretary Douglas McKay announced today.

"As the Department's assistant secretary for public land management, Mr. Lewis has displayed over the past two and one-half years an able and consistent leadership in what I believe is one of the most challenging jobs in Washington," Secretary McKay said. "It is with the keenest regret that I have learned that he must return home."

Mr. Lewis was appointed to his Interior post by President Eisenhower on February 10, 1953. He has directed the activities of the Bureau of Land Management, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the National Park Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Office of Territories.

Mr. Lewis said his decision was based on personal concerns which made it impossible for him to remain away any longer from his private affairs.

"It has been a privilege to serve under President Eisenhower in Washington," he said. "I am grateful for the opportunity I have had for public service with the Department of the Interior. I was delighted to accept when the appointment was offered to me by the President and Secretary McKay.

"However, when I accepted, it was with the understanding that I could remain in Washington only two years. I have now overstayed that time by more than six months and I find that it is impossible for me to postpone my return to Arizona any further."

In his capacity as an Interior official, Mr. Lewis was responsible for the supervision of five key bureaus during the period in which their activities and programs were being reorganized to conform with the policies of the administration of President Eisenhower.

Under his direction, the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service carried out vigorous programs designed to expand and improve wildlife refuges and national park areas. He initiated the development of "Mission 66"—a program of long-range planning to meet the Nation's growing demands on the parks. The 40 percent increase in the appropriation for this fiscal year was hailed by Mr. Lewis as a vital step forward in helping provide the parks with improved facilities and recreational services.

The retiring Assistant Secretary has been an outspoken advocate of conservation measures to protect the Nation's natural resources. He has urged that the public domain be integrated with the private economy as rapidly as is compatible with the sound use of land.

He was one of the earliest supporters of legislation recently approved by Congress which outlaws the use of mining claims to preempt timber resources of the national forest and other public land areas.

During his period in office, the Department secured the first appropriation in a new program to revise outmoded land regulations. It is now possible for the Bureau of Land Management to classify nearly 14,000 more land applications per year without any increase in personnel. The cost for handling each case has been reduced with a gross saving of about \$280,000 per year.

Assistant Secretary Lewis also launched an aggressive, long-range program for soil conservation for the 273 million acres of public and Indian lands administered by the Department. This program will entail the eventual expenditure of \$250 million and will require a 20-year period. Secretary McKay placed this program under Mr. Lewis' direct administration.

The emergency program for Navajo education was developed under Mr. Lewis' supervision. It is expected to reach its goal of an educational opportunity for each Navajo boy and girl this fall.

In the field of Territorial affairs, a notable achievement during his period of service was the revision of the Organic Act of the Virgin Islands to place the island government on a sound and economical footing while conferring a greater degree of self-government on the local inhabitants.

During May of this year, Mr. Lewis served as a United States representative at the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) Conference in Geneva, Switzerland. He was chiefly responsible at the meeting for the consideration of tariffs on tuna.

Mr. Lewis was engaged in the practice of law in Phoenix for 27 years prior to his appointment as an assistant secretary of the Department. He plans to return to this practice with the Phoenix law firm of Lewis, Roca, Scoville, and Beauchamp when he leaves Washington.

Mr. Lewis was born in Phoenix on January 7, 1903, the son of Ernest William Lewis and Ethel Orme Lewis. In 1938 he married Barbara Cunningham Smith. They have one son, Orme Lewis, Jr.

After attending public schools in Phoenix and Globe, Arizona, he studied at Stanford University and George Washington University where he received his LL. B. degree in 1926.

He is a member of the bar of Arizona and California, the American Bar Association, the Federal Bar Association and the American Judicature Society.

Mr. Lewis has served as a member of the Arizona Legislature and as Republican State Chairman in Arizona.

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